Want More Event Conversions? Here's How

By Susan Saldibar

What's great about events is that, if done properly, they give you something you just can't get with other forms of lead generation: a room full of highly targeted prospects. Bob Wilgus, Director of Marketing and Strategic Digital Communications for [LeadingResponse](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner) would put an emphasis on "if done properly". As a leading provider of off-site educational events, LeadingResponse has made a science out of knowing what goes into a successful lead generation event.

So I decided to pick Bob's brain to see if we could boil down the process of holding a successful lead generating event into logical steps. Not only was Bob able to comply, he provided some pretty interesting details.

Here are Bob's tips:

1. **Hold your community event offsite:** Community events held offsite, at a local American cuisine restaurant, outperform onsite events by 4-to-1!

2. **Serve food:** The act of "breaking bread" with friends, neighbors and strangers is a powerful dynamic. It allows you to answer individual questions during meal time and also gives you time to book more tours.

3. **Use the right list:** If you are still using shallow lists --- address, household income, homeowner --- to create a mailing list, you're wasting your money. There are many more list options available than you might think. Work with a marketing partner who has experience and access to the right data for your invitation list.

4. **Choose the right days to hold your events:** The data LeadingReponse has gathered from promoting more than 500,000 events is clear: Tuesday and Thursday evenings are the best days to hold events.

5. **Choose the right time:** Having tracked the data from more than 19 million seminar attendees, we have found that 6:30 p.m. is the best time to hold an event.

6. **Make it easy for people to RSVP:** Just posting your community's general phone number will doom your event. You need to have a unique RSVP phone number, answered by a live person 24/7. It is also a good idea to use an online RSVP service to enable caregivers and adult children to respond.

7. **Drive time matters:** Believe it or not, consumers prefer their drive time from their home to your event location to be 20 minutes or less! (Note: if your mailing list is going out to folks who will have a drive time longer than that, not only won't they respond, but, even if they do, there's a 65% chance they will change their minds the day of the event due to the driving distance.

8. **Use the right messaging:** Twenty-two years of event responder data show that consumers avoid community-specific seminars (i.e. learning about your specific community). They much prefer messaging that promotes education and information!

9. **Make reminder calls:** Be sure to make confirmation calls at least 48 hours before your event. Not only does this allow you to adjust for the number of meals needed, but it's another chance to start building that relationship with your potential resident.

10. **Event Day Prep:** At least two hours before your event you should be at your location, setting up the room (round tables, NOT classroom style), testing your PowerPoint, audio (yes, you will need a PA system – remember the age of your attendees). Expect some attendees to arrive at least 30 minutes early. Be prepared with a sign-in sheet and staff to welcome your guests. Have a soft-drink or beverage at each seat and a video or music playing while folks are gathering and being seated.

Very interesting. I have to admit, as a marketer who has put together numerous events over the years, I would never have pegged Tuesdays and Thursdays to be the best days of the week to hold an event. And, I'd probably have inserted way too much brand-heavy content into the event. So, this marketing veteran has learned a thing or two.

Frankly, folks, you just got some pretty good free advice here. I'd pass this over to your marketing director. Find out if they know to schedule an event on a Tuesday at 6:30. Could be interesting.